

Public Participation and the European Water Framework Directive (HarmoniCOP)

Project

Research Program

[FP 5](#)

Duration

Oct 2002 - Aug 2005

[HarmoniCOP](#)

The Water Framework Directive restructures the legislative frame for the protection of European water bodies and establishes new approaches to an integrated and comprehensive management of river basins. Part of these novel approaches is the explicit requirement for an involvement of interest groups and the public at large in the different implementation phases of the Directive.

The main objective of the HarmoniCOP (project duration 2002 – 2005) project, which was funded under the 5th European framework for Research, was to increase the understanding of participatory river basin management in Europe. It caters to the paradigm that river basin management can only be effective and sustainable if the actors at each level and in each phase and sector become engaged in a social learning process.

The HarmoniCOP project is based on an analysis of current approaches and methods to participatory river basin management in nine European countries. Ecologic's role involved analysing German experiences and best practices in this area. Based on this research, case studies were developed in each of the participating countries, with the purpose of serving as best practice examples. The experiences and methodological insights were compiled in the [HarmoniCOP handbook](#) which provides practical guidance to decision-makers in water management, thus providing for a hands-on application of the principles of public participation in a river basin context. Additionally, an [Ecologic Brief](#) gives an overview of the main results and policy implications of the HarmoniCOP project. The project and the drafting process for the handbook itself was also conducted in a participatory way with representatives from NGOs, local governments, policymakers, water industry and farming participating as external advisers.

Ecologic Institute was responsible for compiling the [national study for Germany](#), which focused on the Rhine and Elbe basins and mainly analysed the origins and past experiences of public participation approaches in water management.

In addition, Ecologic Institute also supported the Institute for Environmental Systems Research at the University of Osnabrück in conducting a real-time [case study in the Elbe basin](#). The main research

focus of this study was the interplay of authorities and the various interest groups. Ecologic Institute's portion of the report focused on the Havel river basin, which was also investigated in the context of a project funded by the Berlin Centre of Competence for Water (KWB) on "[Public participation in the Havel coordination area \(Berlin-Brandenburg\)](#)".

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European Commission, [Directorate-General Research](#) (DG Research), International

Partner

University of Osnabrück, [Institute of Environmental Systems Research](#) (USF), Germany
[Katholieke Universiteit Leuven](#) (KU Leuven), Belgium
École nationale des ponts et chaussées, [Laboratoire Techniques, Territoires et Sociétés](#) (LATTs), France
[Centre National du Machinisme Agricole, du Génie Rural, des Eaux et de Forêts](#) (CEMAGREF), France
[Budapest University of Technology and Economics](#) (BME), Hungary
[University of Udine](#) (UNIUD), Italy
[Delft University of Technology](#) (TU Delft), Netherlands
Maastricht University, [International Centre for Integrated assessment and Sustainable development](#) (ICIS), Netherlands
Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, [Rijkswaterstaat](#) (RIZA), Netherlands
Stichting Waterloopkundig Laboratorium, [WLDelft Hydraulics](#), Netherlands
[Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona](#) (UAB), Spain
[University of Alcalá](#) (UAH), Spain
[Colenco Power Engineering](#), Switzerland
[Water Research Centre](#) (WRc), United Kingdom
[Middlesex University](#), United Kingdom
[University of Aberdeen](#), United Kingdom
[Ecologic Institute](#), Germany

Team

Wenke Schöffel
[Dr. Eleftheria Kampa](#)
Dr. Nicole Kranz
Antje Vorwerk

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